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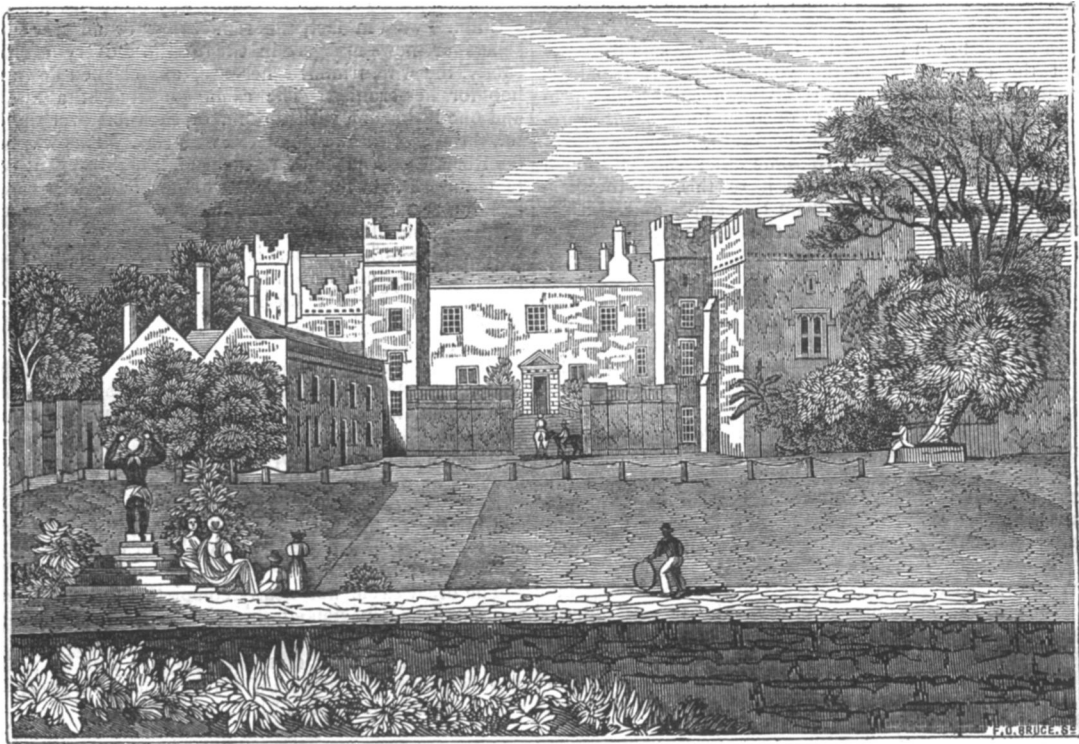
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HOWTH CASTLE, COUNTY OF DUBLIN.

The castle of Howth stands to the right of the village or little town of Howth, on the northern shore of the Bay of Dublin. It is a long battlemented structure, flanked by square towers at each extremity, and approached by a large flight of steps. A spacious hall extends along the whole front of the building, ornamented within by the weapons and armour of ancient days, and among the rest is said to be the identical two-handed sword with which Sir Armoricus Tristram, its first English proprietor, defeated the Danes. The white battlements of this venerable mansion, present a pleasing appearance, as it emerges from the dark wood in which it is embosomed: the estate over which it appears constructed to reign, includes the whole peninsula of Howth, containing 1500 square acres, which, without increase or diminution, has continued for more than six centuries in his lordship's family, having been their residence since the arrival of the first adventurers from England. The name of the earliest of these, of this family, was Sir Armory Tristram, and the adventures recorded of his life, and received as authentic, are more extraordinary than those of any hero in romance. Happening to meet with Sir John de Courcy, who was married to his sister, in the church of St. Mary, at Rouen, he there made a compact with him, that whatever they should win in any realm, either by conquest or otherwise, should be divided between them. On the faith of this agreement, they sought adventures together through Normandy, France, and England, and finally proceeded to Ireland, where the first land they made was Howth. De Courcy was confined by illness to his ship, and the command devolved on Sir Armoricus, who having pushed to shore, was opposed by the Irish at the bridge of Evora, and a fierce encounter ensued, in which seven sons, nephews, and uncles of Sir Armoricus were slain. The Irish were finally defeated,

and the land and title of Howth were allotted to him as his share of the conquest. The bridge of Evora, where this battle is said to have been fought, crosses a mountain stream, which falls into the sea on the north side of Howth, nearly opposite the west end of Ireland's Eye. In clearing out the foundation for the new parish church, erected a few years ago near this spot, a quantity of bones were discovered scattered over an extensive space: and, in the neighbourhood, an antique anvil, with bridle bits and other parts of horse harness. It is conjectured, with some probability, that the armourers' forge was erected on this spot, where the knights were accoutred preparatory to the battle. Sir Armoricus, after a variety of other perilous and wild adventures in Ireland, was surrounded by a superior force in Connaught. His knights were inclined to avail themselves of their horses, and save themselves by flight, but their leader, dismounting, drew his sword, and kissing the cross of it, thrust it into his horse's side: his example was followed by all the knights except two, who were sent to a neighbouring hill, to be spectators of the approaching combat. The Normans were cut off, not a man escaping except the two who afterwards testified the circumstances of the heroic transaction. Some time after, the original family name of Tristram was changed to St. Lawrence, for the following reason:—One of them commanded an army near Clontarf, against the common invaders, the Danes. The battle was fought on St. Lawrence's day, and he made a vow to the Saint, common in those times, that if he were victorious he would assume his name, and entail it upon his posterity. The Danes were defeated, and his vow was religiously preserved. Another romantic circumstance is related of this family. The celebrated Grana Uile, or Grace O'Malley, was noted for her piratical depredations in the reign of Elizabeth. Returning on a certain time from England, where she had

paid a visit to the queen, she landed at Howth, and proceeded to the castle. It was the hour of dinner, and the gates were shut. Shocked at an exclusion so repugnant to her notions of Irish hospitality, she immediately proceeded to the shore, where the young lord was at nurse, and seizing the child, embarked with him, and sailed to Connaught, where her own castle stood. After some time, however, she restored the child, with the express stipulation that the gates should be always thrown open when the family went to dinner, a practice which was observed to a very recent period.

In a chamber in the castle, is a painting said to represent the carrying off of the young lord. A female is mounted on a white horse, receiving a child from a peasant; above, the sky seems to open, and a figure is represented looking on the group below. The picture, however, is thought to allude to some other subject, though the tradition of the castle refers it to this. In the same room is a bed in which William III. slept, and which is said to be preserved exactly as it then was, in remembrance of that circumstance.

THE BLESSED TURF.

And flies the wild report—the baseless tale—
The vague concoction of some vaguer mind—
Sounding its many tongues o'er hill and dale,
The welcome herald of some woe or weal,
And swifter even than the winged wind.

It will be in the recollection of a great proportion of our readers, that about two years since an occurrence took place, strongly marking the peculiar features of the Irish character—superstitious fear, sudden impulse, and extraordinary excitement. I allude to what was, and now is, popularly denominated “The blessed turf;” when the entire population of a very extensive district of country, was aroused and excited to a degree exceeding belief in any other country than Ireland. It was, indeed, considered by many as a circumstance outrivalling in romantic interest many events in the history of our isle which have acquired much greater celebrity; and one which portrayed in vivid colours that restlessness of disposition, which is so singular a trait of the Irish character—that innate wildness and volatility of mind, which ever urges the people to acts of inconsiderate, fearful rashness. In no other country, but Ireland, would a sudden impulse fire almost to distraction half her population. The spring of excitement, once touched, knows not at what point to stand still, like Mynheer von Wodenblock’s mysterious wooden-leg, whose wheels within wheels, and springs acting on springs, once set in motion, by its unlucky artifice carried him with the rapidity of an arrow, through towns and villages, the wilds and forests of Germany, and where still, as the story runs, it urges forward its course with whatever remains of the ingenious Dutchman’s skeleton.

There were people who imagined that this sudden alarm was an expedient used by the disaffected, to ascertain in what space of time the whole nation could be aroused; others say it originated in some wag;—but certain it is, that whoever were the promulgators—whether it had its origin in chance or premeditation—the minds of the people were fearfully excited. All yielding to the sudden impulse, fled hither and thither, like a herd of stricken deer; and thus it has ever been with the Irish peasantry—their ardent, impetuous feelings rush like a mountain-torrent when confined within a narrow channel. Ever alive to a touch of novelty, and snatching at every stimulant to excitement, they are often carried along the tide of some chimerical fantasy; and not only are they carried, but they jump voluntarily and with delight into its gurgling vortex.

At the period referred to, there resided in Killeslin, about two miles from Carlow, one Rory O'Rourke, at whose house all that was strange, comical, extraordinary, new, or fanciful, was retailed—from the most ancient tradition, to the latest news from “*Linen*,” the legend of other days was canvassed, as well as the speeches in parliament; superstitious stories of ghosts, sprites, banshees, leprahauns, fairies, and witches, were told by wholesale. Every thing that was awful and terrible in ancient lore, as well as the deaths, births, and marriages, within twenty

miles round—the phantasies which swell the old tales, of gossipers, and the newly fangled stories of modern events, Rory was an exhaustless fund of such “tales of the times of old;” and Rory Oge, or young Rory, spelled out the recent productions of the press.

As soon as night fell, the beaten path to Rory's house was footed by many a devourer of his ancient traditions. The way lay through a rough and wild mountainous country, along the bank of a small, but deep ravine, through which a gurgling stream forced its way on ledges of rocks. His house was, in fact, the rendezvous of all the story-tellers or news-mongers in the parish. Every evening, Molly, the wife, trimmed her fire, and cleaned down the hob for her cronies. The cabin consisted of a kitchen and one bed-room, with a kind of cock-loft over the latter, formed of hurdles plastered with clay. This was master Rory Oge's place of residence at night; but it contained more than the four bones of the bouchal. It was, in fact, quite a curiosity: there were congregated, in vast profusion, bundles of scallops, spare heads and handles of rakes, pitch-forks, lumber of every description, pots and pans past use, old irons, broken chairs, tables, tea-pots, flax, heads of cabbage hung up for seed, nails, ropes—all the useless paraphernalia of husbandry, and Rory Oge.

The cabin was situated in a wild, romantic spot, having a still more wild and romantic people. A rivulet rushed over its pebbled course in the rear; and above frowned the barren, heath-covered brow of Knucc-na-raw mountain, with Carlow in the distance; and on the opposite side, towards the colliery, an extended sterile tract, terminated by a dimly blue mountain.

Rory was, of course, well versed in the local tradition and history of his native hills—could tell when Killeslin was “a mighty great place entirely”—of its courts, mansions, governors, &c.

The usual circle was nearly completed, when the latch was raised, and in stalked, shivering and shaking, Shemus Donohoe.

“Why the mischief run a-huntin’ wid you, for a Shemus, is id now you’re comin’? Did you see a ghost—or what’s comin’ over you at all?” said Molly.

“*Yerrah, yerrah!* but it’s a murderin’ cowl’d night,” said Shemus in reply—“it would skin a March hare. It’s well for you, who needn’t fear the cowl’d, an’ your good selvige of fat linin’ you. Have you e’er a drop o’ the raal mountain stuff?—it’s yerself hasn’t yer heart in it.”

“Arrah, to be sure I have;” for, reader, you must know, what it would not be fair to tell the gauger, the illicit mountain-dew was not only retailed, but manufactured at her house.

Shemus, seated on the hob, with the pipe in his mouth and the glass by his side, was soon in all his glory; the duceen was so short—for an old *seasoned* one is always preferred—that the head alone could be seen protruding from his lips.

Molly laid down her own pipe, and said, “As sure as I’m a sinner, ’twas talkin’ to his sweetheart he was.”

“The sorra lie you tell there—I’ll never deny it. Sure the boys an’ the girls will be talkin’ while there is a tack o’ the world together. Tare-an-’ounty, sure it’s not for the bit they eat we’d be about ’em, the crathurs, the darlins o’ the world.”

“Will you, Rory avourneen, take a drop?” said Molly, holding over a glass to her mate.

“Musha, it was an angel spoke—who’d throw it over their shoulder—(takes a deep pull.) Oh, Molly dear, it’s mighty good!—ha, ha!—it’s the best *run* we had the year.” Rory was *softened* of course by this deep libation from the cruiskeen lawn, and consequently love was the predominant feeling in his soul. Looking with swimming eyes over at Molly, who was sitting on her hunkers—“Well, Molly,” said he, “I remember the time I was coortin’ you,” and he stroked back his aged locks, which were as fair as the white cliff that sheltered his door from the northern blast; “an’ it’s not that you’re to the fore I say it, Molly asthore, but you war the purty girl, charm-in’ as the queen of May, the day I saw you first. I love you now as well as when, under the shade of the big spreading beech-tree at your father’s house, I first pledged you my heart and soul, and devoted myself to your sarvice for ever more.”